1: Bowen-Jones et al. K-5 (1955-1958) 1961
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INTRODUCTION

The distinctive qualities of Malta first exerted their attraction on us over fifteen years ago. In 1954 an opportunity for closer study occurred and we developed the idea of undertaking some form of geographical survey. 114 121

When the authors made a preliminary survey of documentary source material, their first reaction was one of surprise at the relative paucity of literature available; although since that time there has been an improvement in the quality, extent and accessibility of studies relating to the Islands, this original impression persists. Smallness in overall area and in population numbers might be held responsible for such a limited degree of intellectual interest; and yet the true importance of Malta has been out of all proportion to mere size. The number of references quoted below might seem a rebuttal of these assertions. Indeed in total amount the material extant is superficially impressive. However, with certain significant exceptions, many studies prove to be unreliable either because of their uncritical acceptance of earlier dicta, or because analyses are relatively superficial in that they lack foundation upon direct observation and on the cross-checking given by comparative studies in related fields. These introductory remarks are intended not as complacent and destructive criticism but rather as a partial explanation and justification of the wide but not definitive range of our work. The research on which our book is based commenced as a sample study of land utilization. Because however of the difficulty of accepting other than very few statements as authoritative it became essential to undertake simultaneous inquiries in varied fields.

Equally important as a reason for attempting a relatively comprehensive coverage of affairs Maltese is the fact that in these strange, perhaps unique, islands the interweave of human and non-human elements is so close. Approach to a single isolated problem leads extraordinarily rapidly to all other parts of the complex, more quickly and completely than we have observed elsewhere. Whatever the starting point; micro-climate or semantics, hoe-types or constitutional history, any sustained investigation involves a mass of varied but inter-related problems. 114 121 182

The first simple project evolved for these reasons into a complex scheme carried out under the auspices of two Universities, two Governments, and in association with two Civil Services as well as other organizations, British, Maltese and international. We have therefore also experienced the need and received the opportunity of testing and experimenting with various techniques of geographical research. Circumstances allowed the participation of a relatively large number of workers of differing levels in experience. Besides full-time researchers at postgraduate level and a number of university teachers who made Malta a specific interest, there was scope for drawing upon the energy and enthusiasm of undergraduate members of the Department. In this way, the terrain could be fully covered and geography practised through the soles of the feet, with every part surveyed by personal observation on the ground. During the more or less parallel investigations therefore made necessary it has been possible to reconcile the methods of team research without restricting the freedom of the individuals concerned, whilst at the same time the Field Directors have been able to survey the whole of the work and take part in all of its constituent elements. It has been very reassuring to find that the checks provided by consequent overlapping have been consistently favourable. 114

As professional geographers, we welcome an opportunity of stating a belief that has lain in our minds throughout our work in Malta and elsewhere, and that experience has only served to confirm. This is that geography implies first, field observation of conditions relating to the way men live; secondly a willingness to trace a relationship through, and if necessary beyond the formal bounds normally assigned to a particular academic discipline. Thirdly, in order to give the whole process form and meaning, the operation must be rooted in a physical regional framework - this is what makes our approach 'geography' rather 124

1: Bowen-Jones et al. K-5 (1955-1958) 1961
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121 than sociology. All that we attempt to observe, explain and compare occurs on or near a particular expanse of the earth's surface hereby conferring a unity to the studies we undertake.

The project thus far has been mainly designed to cover the agricultural sector (with all that that implies), but the impossibility of isolating any single segment of Maltese life has provided us with full justification for frequent divergence. Not only is it impossible to consider any element solely from the point of physical production; it becomes necessary to consider the wider and finally often more important factors such as, among others, social status, adaptability to change, and mental as well as physical climate.

We are therefore led to the belief that the facts here presented have an applicability wider than that to Maltese agriculture alone. It is not intended to produce a plan for specific lines of development - we feel strongly that this is not our function. Instead, we hope that our study will provide a background for development, the establishment of a factual corpus of knowledge that will allow development and future policy making by others.

In the case of the Maltese Islands, as in many other regions, such provision is not only necessary but imperative. During this century there has occurred a striking alteration of the status and importance of many dependent territories and newly independent states. Such rather sudden revaluations, inevitably consequent on erratic reactions to changing circumstances, are historically normal. Hitherto, however, resulting changes in sovereignty and economic and cultural ties have taken little account of the desires of the peoples concerned. Today, new ideas of political status are paralleled by ideas of development and 'natural rights' on the economic plane. Much of this, it is true, is a historical difference of degree rather than of kind. Although Malta for 5,000 years has always been part of some larger socio-cultural or political unit, it has always maintained a certain especial status of autonomy. Equally in the economic sector there has always existed some insular and independent activity. Nevertheless, more than ever before, the Maltese are and feel they are themselves now responsible for their socio-economic destinies. With such a responsibility, there arises a need, not always wholly welcome, and at times conceded only with reluctance, firstly for knowledge of basic facts relating to existing institutions, and secondly, for sympathetic understanding and appraisal of these facts. It is our earnest hope that this present work, which amounts to an extensive abstract of investigations and reports which are in themselves too specialized and lengthy for normal publication, will assist toward such an understanding.

128 The arrangement of the subject matter has been chosen in order to suit the attempt at integrating diverse but relevant material. Section One is devoted to studies of the physical environment. To the non-specialist much of it may appear prosaic and 'earthbound' but, as will appear, without such appraisal of limitations and possibilities any socio-economic analysis would remain overspeculative. In Section Two are considered the societies which have both left their impress on the landscape and produced cumulative responses to environment. Section Three contains studies of the contemporary rural scene; many of these directly and indirectly also help an understanding of non-agricultural activities. The concluding Section Four is an attempt to select and inter-relate the ideas and themes which have seemed to us of the greatest importance, and to present them in a single impression of the continuum which is Malta.

122 It remains to particularize, with deep gratitude, the assistance received during our investigations. Original interest, a kind of priming of the pump, came from Sir James Duff, then Warden of the Durham Colleges; and next, the support of the Colonial Economic Research Council, which provided financial backing for a large part of the survey. The Government of Malta also associated itself with the scheme, and provided powerful and indispensable support, financial and technical, especially through the Office of the Prime Minister, and Minister for Agriculture and his officials. As well, contacts with all officials of the Government, Imperial and National, were extremely fruitful, and personally most cordial.

1: Bowen-Jones et al. K-5 (1955-1958) 1961
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Chapter IV

MALTA BEFORE A.D. 1800

A. Malta before the Knights

The Maltese Islands were probably first settled towards the end of the third millenium B.C.; certainly there is no evidence of any earlier occupation. From this time onwards, the landscape has had stamped upon it the successive imprints of a series of cultures and culture-contacts. This is not the place to attempt a detailed analytical history, but any study of a region and its people must consider time as well as place. In Malta we have, in the course of our fieldwork, continually felt an extraordinarily strong sense of continuity, an insistence that much which is contemporary can only be understood in terms of the past, and often of the remote past. Conversely, a close examination of the landscape can help to illuminate the past in a strictly historical sense.

The sort of question which arises in an investigation of the rural landscape may be exemplified by the much-debated problem of 'cart-ruts'. On some of the expanses of bare rock which exist in various parts of the island of Malta are deeply incised grooves, in dual and parallel alignment, sometimes in isolation, often in complex 'tramway' patterns (Plate VII). Various attempts have been made to explain them (1) but with little success. We are certain only of their approximate age. To the prehistorian they are of obvious direct interest. To ourselves they are irritatingly fascinating because of the indirect and obscure evidence which they seem to offer of the nature of the processes which have operated on the land of Malta. Were they friction-incised through a soil cover by skid-carts? If this is so, then the soil cover must not only have been more extensive than at present but must also have evolved under different climatic and edaphic conditions from those with which we are now familiar. What can we deduce from the present limited exposure of the ruts and from the fact that often they appear to have been blotted out by cultivation? The traditional answer, as put forward by Zammit (2), is that they carried sledges for the collection and transport of soil so that man could concentrate the soil in field plots. Thus field-making inevitably covered the ruts except on the ridges and bluffs. There are defects in these and other explanations, none of which come near to helping us to estimate the number and kind of people involved.

The settlements, too, present problems. Thus the archaeologist: 'The curious and complete absence of settlement-sites throughout the prehistoric period, which also holds good for the Punic and later periods, seems susceptible of only one explanation. The best sites must have been chosen for settlement very early in the islands' occupation and these have remained centres of habitation until the present day' (3). May we then assume that, with the exception of the 'lost villages' of more recent times, the settlement pattern of today results from continual addition to, and an absence of erasures from the palimpsest? The answer is not only of chronological interest but has an essential place in any analysis of present-day Malta.

For such reasons as these we have attempted in this section to give a time perspective to the Maltese picture in order to help our present understanding.

The first Maltese would seem to have been Neolithic farmers using impressed ceramic ware of a type associated with the *Stentinello* culture of eastern Sicily. The stylistically earliest wares of Ghar Dalam (I) (Fig. 29) are associated with megalithic temples already well enough developed to have lost their original tomb character and to have become cult centres. These and later temples, built during the eight centuries before *c.* 1500 B.C. (Period I), are impressive and surviving contributions to the landscape by the first Neolithic people. Megalithic rock-tombs have been found at Xemxija and probably from this type of structure there evolved five distinct and successive phases of temple architecture. The earliest are those of Mgarr (II) and Xewkija (III) with a simple

1: Bowen-Jones et al. K-5 (1955-1958) 1961
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INTRODUCTION

Contemporary agriculture can only be understood in terms of the whole nexus of environmental and human factors. Although a general truism this assertion continually needs to be emphasised in a study of Malta. In these Islands the observer will meet more puzzling features both major and minor in scale than it is conceivable would be found in any territory of similar size. The wider one's comparative experience, the more it appears necessary to discard general principles and to adopt a habit of querying the origin of every minor element in the landscape. The various problems are examined elsewhere but a brief statement of their type and range will serve to depict the complex nature of Maltese agriculture.

All visitors to Malta are invariably impressed by the vast extent of stone terrace walls which give to the ground-level observer an impression of rocky barrenness. The questions which arise, and which have not been satisfactorily answered, are manifold in their complexity. Do the terrace-walls merely serve to retain naturally-evolved soil and if so is the present density of enclosures strictly necessary? Are these walls, on the other hand, ramparts behind which man-made soil accumulations have been slowly built up to create artificial fields? If the latter, does normal pedological analysis provide a sufficient basis for soil husbandry? If the former, how far can enclosures be enlarged to permit a greater use of mechanised techniques?

The climate of Malta, as analysed in Chapter II, has some especial characteristics. How far do certain combinations of temperature, humidity and wind velocity in various topographic circumstances encourage the appearance and survival of the very many diseases and pests which afflict Maltese crops? To what extent may the climate-soil complex be held responsible for the virtual absence of the olive and the remarkable ignorance concerning viticulture which is only now being dispelled? Must the physical environment be regarded as the main reason for the fact that Maltese farmers have never produced important indigenous strains of crops or livestock but have relied entirely on breeds imported from their more productive neighbours?

Innumerable queries of this type result from even the most cursory visual survey, and any attempt to answer them brings in even more complex human questions. If the maintenance of man-made soil in artificial fields by arduous manual labour is essential for the ecological stability of many regions, how important is the conflict between the needs of production and the social desires of the cultivators? How far has poor husbandry been a product of rural isolation? How measurable is distance as it affects contact between producer and market, between village-dweller and *il-Belt*? None of these and other questions is uniquely applicable to Malta, but *in loto* they present such a formidable array as to make one feel that these small islands have concentrated within them certain microcosmic qualities.

In this Section are considered some of the observable facts that directly concern the use and potentialities of agricultural resources. The main features of the economy and society in general have been described in previous sections; the basic elements of the agricultural sector may be summarised as follows.

The total area of the Maltese Islands is some 280,512 *tmien* of which 152,343 *tmien* are cultivated (54 per cent of the total) (1). The relationship between Malta and Gozo in these respects is remarkably constant, both islands having a similar proportion of worked land, Malta possessing 79 per cent. of the total area and of the cultivated land. Of the 7,272 *tmien* of irrigated land, almost 80 per cent. is found in Malta where the only large irrigated zones also occur.

This cultivated land is worked in 12,315 registered farmholdings of which over 70 per cent. are in Malta. The rural community (i.e. persons living in dwellings registered as farms and including farmworkers' children and other members of the family otherwise employed) number 57,354 (72 per cent. in Malta), almost 18 per cent. of the total population. Of this rural community 34

1: Bowen-Jones et al. K-5 (1955-1958) 1961
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per cent. are children under 14 years of age. The number of whole-time farmers, 8,100, is now smaller than the group of part-time agriculturalists - 8,946, and in its age-composition differs significantly from the total population - 48 per cent. are aged 50 years or more (1948 - 33.8 per cent.) as compared with 31 per cent. for the Islands as a whole.

The relatively small and, until very recently, declining size of the full-time farming population, and its rapid ageing, suggest a decline in the importance and status of agriculture. The implications of these figures are discussed elsewhere but it is worth noting that the agricultural areas are still inhabited by over 126,000 persons most of whom draw some real income from the land in amounts which may often be small per capita but which observation suggests are large in total.

The total value of the recorded crop product is estimated at some £2.27 millions. From observation in Malta and experience elsewhere one can suggest that is under-estimated by a fraction of the order of 10 per cent. (See p. 10, - Essential Statistics - for further information.)

The combined value of crop and livestock products is estimated at almost £6,000,000. The income accruing to the cultivators is distributed in such a multiplicity of ways in such varying amounts that no useful estimate of average per capita income can be made. Of the disbursements of some £3 millions, an amount of the order of £2½ millions is expended on imports, notably of fodder and store cattle. Earnings of foreign currency amount to approximately £500,000, almost half of which derived from potato exports. This imbalance between imports and exports in the agricultural sector appears even more striking when one remembers that F.D.T. imports of over £9,000,000 make up 35 per cent. of the total Maltese import bill.

The efforts of the 9 per cent. of the employed population engaged in agriculture are already considerable but the needs of Malta are great. With no known physical resources of any size other than the land, it becomes of vital importance that farming productivity should be raised even further and that special effort is directed towards a legitimate degree of self-sufficiency in agricultural products. Much of the analysis that follows this introduction must be considered in the light of present and future needs.

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1: Bowen-Jones et al. K-5 (1955-1958) 1961
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Chapter VII

A. The Land Use Survey of the Maltese Islands

When, in 1954, the decision was made to undertake a programme of geographical research into Maltese agricultural resources and their utilisation, it was also decided to base such a programme on fundamental observational work. The availability of excellent maps on scales of 25 inches, 6 inches and 2 inches to the mile, made it possible to envisage a complete and detailed survey of land use, field by field, plot by plot. Financial exigencies and the need for concentrating work into a short critical period, made it necessary so to plan the first visit as to make the findings representative of the whole range of conditions observable. The work was later extended to cover the full area of the Islands. 311* 121

From the outset, it was realised that work along the lines adopted elsewhere under the World Land Utilisation Survey scheme, while valuable as a first step in regions of considerable extent, would be inadequate under Maltese conditions. Several of the categories suggested by the scheme for use in the Old World (e.g. 6: Unimproved Grazing Land and 7: Woodland) do not exist in Malta while others (e.g. 3: Tree and other Perennial Crops and 4: Crop Land) are too broad to give any indication of regional land use characteristics. The small size of the Maltese Islands has made it possible, despite the minute sub-division of the land to carry out a field-by-field survey of use while at the same time distinguishing all the main crops. It is the combinations of these many different crops which most obviously mark out the different agricultural regions and which make necessary a breakdown of the broader land use categories. It has been appreciated that in many territories suitable conditions do not exist for this 'microscopic' approach, but the authors venture to wonder whether the dangers of more general surveys may not outweigh the value of their findings. These dangers lie not intrinsically in the scale of work but rather in that the findings, if used at all, will generally be used by people who may not appreciate their shortcomings. The problem lies in the gulf between the researcher and those responsible for policies and action.

The survey has been essentially a team effort, directed by the senior authors, the field work being carried out by them with the assistance of the student members of the survey parties (see Introduction, p. 9). It was found that a great deal of useful work could be carried out by the latter, provided that more experienced workers were available to organise and take part in the actual field work and to correlate and interpret the results. The basic method was the plotting of crops actually growing in the fields at the time of the survey (see below) on 6-inch or 25-inch maps. The latter scale was used in parts of Malta where fields are too small to allow the use of the 6-inch scale and throughout Gozo where 6-inch maps are not available. However, the work was not confined to mere crop-plotting, but included the noting of a variety of elements: the quality of the crops, conditions of soil, drainage and water supply, the relationship of crops to rock type, slope, exposure and other physical factors, farming techniques, irrigation methods and the character and extent of rural settlement. A large number of perspective sketches, plots of individual fields, and case studies of farms, a fraction of which are reproduced in the present volume, were made and many photographs taken. Wherever possible, farmers were interviewed and, although this was most easily done when interpreters were available, sufficient farmers with some English were found to extend the scope of this part of the work to cover some 250 individuals. Each day's work was followed by a conference at which points noted by the field workers were discussed and recorded. By these means, sufficient material of all kinds was gathered to permit not only the compilation of an accurate and very detailed record of land use but also a reasoned interpretation of observed fact which could be viewed alongside published official reports and statistical material. The authors so arranged their share of the work that they were able to visit all regions of the

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1: Bowen-Jones et al. K-5 (1955-1958) 1961
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SECTION IV Chapter XI

An Assessment of the Cultural Landscape

In this book we have attempted to portray the Maltese Islands 'in the round'. Deficiencies and omissions occur; the former unfortunate, the latter equally unfortunate but also deliberate because of space limitations. Nevertheless, we believe that our study, such as it is, has illustrated certain points of value. First, and this is a geographical truism, the relationship between man and the land on which he lives is infinitely complex. In the case of Malta this relationship is also astoundingly complete and coherent, so that alteration in any one part may provoke repercussions on all the rest. Hence, under these circumstances, change of any kind should be introduced with extreme caution; it has been demonstrated that lines of action which seem apparently well-found and reasonable at the time of inception can have wholly unforeseen and unintentional consequences. This warning has a general as well as local validity. Further, and in the light of this situation, it becomes essential to have as full a knowledge as possible of local conditions before undertaking action. Such knowledge can only be acquired through observation, which must be as complete and detailed as financial resources allow.

Thirdly, investigation of the use man makes of his surroundings leads to the conclusion that, in a last analysis, it is not the actual physical conditions which control man's activities - it is the view that man himself takes of what can or cannot be done which really matters. From the physical standpoint Malta is a highly typical Mediterranean country, yet we still do not know why the vine and the olive, these most characteristic plants, have hitherto only made temporary invasions of Malta. We do however know that the factors behind this were not physical - e.g. climate or to do with soil. It would thus seem to be the way man actually estimates the physical potentialities of his home region that governs what takes place - put in another way, we may say that environment finally exists only in the minds of men. In such a form it can appear intractable, offering insuperable obstacles, and mysterious in its effects. Hence, resource use should not be thought of solely as a routine controlled by physical media, but as a process in which temperament and attitudes of mind are involved. Recognition of the human factor as indissolubly associated with the physical elements of geography underlies our approach: and it is in this sense that our subtitle 'Background to Development' should be interpreted.

Lastly, there is an opportunity to draw together some of the threads which we have unravelled from the general weave, and summarise the main themes.

The principal conclusion is that everything one sees in Malta, other than the major topographical features, is man-made and man-maintained in existence. For this reason there is an unstable equilibrium that eternally threatens to collapse.

Physical environment is fundamentally harsh. The component rocks consist almost entirely of fissured and fractured Tertiary calcareous series, mostly of Miocene age; and natural accumulation of relatively insoluble inorganic soil aggregates is very slow everywhere except on the narrow outcrops of the Blue Clays. There is complete absence of surface water and subsurface moisture is small. Only in the western half of the Island do non-saline water-tables now rise near to ground level over appreciable areas, and only in one restricted area in the east - at Marsa - has this been even historically important. Malta has a highly accidented topography. The western half of the Island is heavily faulted and forms a region of scarpland and faulted basins. The eastern area has more subdued relief particularly in its central and eastern parts, but even here the legacy of gorge formation - the dry wieds of Malta - during the humid late Pleistocene, and the small scale erosional etching of all major and minor geological and structural junctions have resulted in there being very little land of low gradient.

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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Preface

This study was carried out and written shortly before Malta became an independent nation. Its purpose is to present a descriptive analysis of Maltese village politics. In many respects these are quite unusual, for in Malta, which has been administered as a fortress for the last four centuries, there are no village headmen, mayors or councillors to serve as links between their villages and the central government. But in spite of the highly centralized administration certain activities in the villages do play a part in the decision of both local and national issues, though at first sight they may not seem to be closely connected with politics as this is usually conceived. These are political activities, for as Prof. Lucy Mair has observed, politics is concerned with the ways persons and groups compete to influence the outcome of disputes and community decisions in accordance with their own interests.[1] The central problem can thus be divided into three major parts: first, to explore the relations between competing persons and groups; second, to examine the nature of the issues which concern them and the community; and third, to trace the channels through which they bring influence to bear on those who make the decisions.

After a brief sketch of Malta in time and space, I examine successively the articulation of the State, the Church and the political parties with the villages, the ties of neighbourhood and family, the social composition of the villages, and the basis of leadership. Against this background I show how issues which originate within the Church, and in particular over the cult of saints, affect village social organization. I then look at the effects of disputes arising out of issues of national policy. Finally, I examine the channels of influence open to the villagers.

Throughout this study I have been exclusively concerned with describing and analysing the political life of the villages of Malta and Gozo. But it has occasionally been necessary for me to make brief excursions into the field of national politics, for because of Malta's smallness, national political disputes swiftly become issues

[1] Lucy Mair, *Primitive Government* (London, Penguin Books, 1962), p. 10.

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
EZ6 Malta EZ6

which divide the villages. I have therefore presented the current political and religious issues in Malta as concisely as possible, and have made no attempt to evaluate or to pass judgement on the policies of State, Church or political party. Consequently, any attempt to put the facts contained herein to polemical use is likely to distort them.

Though I lived in Malta during 1957 and 1958, this study is based on the research I carried out there from July 1960 to September 1961 under a grant from the Colonial Social Science Research Council, to whom I am most grateful. The terms of reference on which the research was based, and the form this final report has assumed, were dictated solely by my personal interests; my work was neither carried out on behalf of, nor a report to, a government.

My wife and daughters were with me during the entire period of fieldwork, and their encouragement and interest as well as the many friends they made were a great asset. We spent our first five months in Farrug and the last eight months in Kortin. These are not the real names of the villages, for the inhabitants of neither seek recognition. Indeed, throughout this study I have been at pains to avoid any indiscretion which would repay most shamefully our special debt of gratitude to friends and neighbours for their hospitality and good humour in the face of our ignorance of their customs. For the same reason, the names of many of the persons and saints who figure in this account have been altered.

I chose to work in Farrug because it is one of the villages divided by competing band clubs, and among other things I was particularly interested in the part this unusual rivalry plays in village politics. With a population of approximately 1,400, it is one of the smaller Maltese villages. We later moved to Kortin, a village of almost 5,000, since its size and the fact that it is not divided by band club rivalry provided an interesting contrast to Farrug. Available housing determined the choice of these particular two villages from among the many that would have met my requirements. Besides detailed research in these villages, I carried out comparative studies into the general organization, leadership and patterns of conflict of 12 other communities. In this work Mr. Edward Micallef was my very able research assistant for three months. I chose 11 of these villages by stratifying all villages in Malta and Gozo according to population and then drawing out a

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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30 per cent random sample. Those selected this way were Balzan, Dingli, Gudja, Għarb, Għargħur, Mosta, Qala, Qrendi, Xagħra, Żebbuġ (Malta) and Żurrieq. I also chose Sliema, a large suburb, to provide a special contrast to the villages. Thus the general statements I make about Maltese villages are based on a fairly wide cross-section.

Thanks to the patient teaching of our friends Francis and Evelyn Chetcuti during the year preceding fieldwork, I was able to begin to work in Maltese soon after my arrival. Much of my work, however, was done in English, which many informants spoke fluently.

I also wish to express my thanks to Mr. Trafford Smith, former Lieutenant-Governor of Malta; to Mr. Maurice Abela, the Principal Government Statistician, and Chev. Paul Naudi, Director of Information, and their assistants; to Dr. V. De Pasquale, Chev. J. Galea, Mr. E. R. Leopardi and Mr. John Bezzina of the Royal Malta Library; to the Revs. Joseph Ghigo S.J., Paul Pace, Paul Said, Joseph Theuma, Benjamin Tonna, Charles Vella and Anton Xiberras, and to the Hon. A. Barbara, Dr. Brian Beeley, Mr. J. Cassar Pullicino, Mr. Francis Mizzi and Mr. Joseph Muscat for their interest and help in many ways. Prof. J. Aquilina kindly allowed me to read the manuscript of his unpublished work on Maltese proverbs.

I am greatly indebted to the staff and my fellow students at the Department of Anthropology of the London School of Economics for their stimulating discussion, both formal and informal, of this material.

Finally, I wish to record here my very special thanks and obligation to Professor Lucy Mair, my academic supervisor, for the valuable criticism and patient help she gave me before and during my research and especially in analysing and writing up the material collected in the field.

Except for minor alterations, the present work is identical with the Ph.D. thesis I submitted to the University of London in November 1962.

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the glaring skies. This stone, so characteristic of Malta, provides a gradual transition from the open country to the compact, densely populated communities in which the people live.

II

In 1960, just under 329,000 people lived on the islands' 122 square miles. This makes the Maltese archipelago, with a population density of 2,700 per square mile, one of the most thickly populated countries in the world. Slightly over half the population live in the urban area which centres on Valletta and the Grand Harbour. The rest, and the part with which this study is concerned, live in clearly separated villages and towns outside the conurbation. The population of Gozo is 28,000, and that of Comino 30.

The pressure of a numerous and fertile population on a very limited area has long been one of Malta's most serious problems. The Maltese marry rather early and, in the past, have been encouraged by the clergy and public opinion to have large families. But the Church in Malta has finally and officially recognized the problem, and recently opened a medical advisory service for married couples. During the period 1957–60, births averaged 8,600 per annum and deaths 2,820, thus the natural annual increase was about 5,780. As the net emigration during this period was 2,170 annually, the total population increased at an annual rate of approximately 3,610. Emigration, however, has taken off many of the young men and left a surplus of females. In 1960 there were 747 men between the ages of 20 and 34 for every 1,000 women in the same age group.[1]

III

Malta's documented history stretches back over a thousand years. The summary of it given here makes no pretence of originality. With but few exceptions, it is based upon the well-known published sources listed in the Bibliography. My sole object is to enable the reader to see the present political system in its historical perspective.

Throughout history, Malta has been subject to many different

[1] *Statistical Abstract of the Maltese Islands, 1960* (Valletta, Central Office of Statistics, 1961). C, pp. 2–3.

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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[p. 27]

CHAPTER III

The Villages and Their Inhabitants

The villages with which this essay deals are the communities outside the densely populated built-up area which centres on Valletta. This area is contained in a rectangle formed by imaginary lines running from St. Julians' and Lija, and thence to Tarxien and Kalkara.[1] Many of these villages, however, are in reality rural towns with populations of up to 15,000, as in the case of Qormi. The Maltese do not distinguish linguistically between small villages and country towns, both are called 'villages' (*rhula*; sing. *rahal*). These are contrasted to *Il-Belt*, the City of Valletta, and its environs. Although I contrast town and country, it is worthwhile pointing once again to Malta's small size. No village in Malta is more than an hour's bus ride from Valletta, and Gozo is only thirty minutes by ferry from its larger sister island. Moreover, 'rival' villages are often no more than a few hundred yards apart.

I am here concerned with abstracting certain principles of social organization, and not with comparing the size and shape of residential groupings, although these two ends are obviously not completely unrelated. Consequently, the geographical limitations which I have placed upon this study are somewhat arbitrary. It is, perhaps, easier to think of the division between town and country as a continuum, with Valletta or Sliema at one end, and small villages such as Qrendi or Gharb at the other. Although much of the description and analysis which follows holds true for both town and village, I am here dealing specifically with the villages.

The separation between town and country corresponds to a rough division of economic and political power, for villagers look to the urban area for employment, income and patronage. First of all, the seat of government is in Valletta, and most of the senior civil servants live there or in Sliema, the sprawling residential suburb that has grown up opposite Valletta during the last 100 years. Secondly, almost all the professionals, wealthy business men,

[1] See the map of Malta and Gozo on page 2, above.

6:Beeley K-S (1957-1958) 1959 EZ6 Malta EZ6

SECTION 1 : The Village in Maltese Rural Society.

121 369 Despite the small size of the Maltese Islands, the physical units in which the people live - the towns and villages (Map 1) - possess diverse characteristics. Sometimes administrative, sometimes morphological (i.e. pertaining to the physical arrangement of functional parts), these provide important evidence of the social and economic nature of society. The present report is concerned with rural society and with farming in the Islands where it is clear that the 'village' both reflects and shapes the character of the farmer. The historical evolution of the settlements cannot be examined here but a brief mention must be made of some important historical facts.

175 369 [361] [396] During their rule in Malta, from 1530 to 1798, the Knights of St. John built Valletta (after 1575) and founded an associated dockyard and surrounding towns. These creations have since expanded and merged to become the nucleus of modern Urban Malta. Before 1530, urban society had existed only in the capital, Notabile (Mdina)[1], and in a few large town-villages, none of which lay on the coast or adjoined the Grand Harbour. Nearly the whole of Malta and Gozo had been previously rural in that the population depended [241] [464] on a subsistence, peasant agriculture, with alternative employment existing only in the larger settlements or in the little harbour at the Borgo (Cospicua). Under the Knights, Valletta on the coast succeeded Notabile in the centre of the Island as capital; and the large town-villages (by pre-1530 standards) of Żebbuġ, Siġġiewi, Żejtun, and Żurrieq declined in relative importance.

[161] [396] [434] [712] [707] Little change otherwise occurred until the century and a half of British rule during which the Valletta nucleus and associated townships became dominant and the increase in the population accelerated[2]. The national economy became overwhelmingly dependent on the naval and commercial dockyards in the first place and, later, on the army and air-force bases[3]. Thus the old rural settlements became relatively if not absolutely of little importance.

RURAL SOCIETY

369 241 433 It is reasonable to talk of the farming communities as being synonomous with 'rural' settlements in Malta but the position demands more precise definition. Certainly the largest part of the Maltese rural-dwelling population has been based on agriculture - whether the peasant subsistence of the past or the commercial farming of today. Peasant subsistence farming in small-holding units, supplying almost all the needs of the family working the farm, is a type of farming in which money plays little or no part. It has faded very rapidly

6:Beeley K-S (1957-1958) 1959 EZ6 Malta EZ6

PREFACE

(1) TERMS OF REFERENCE

114 On October 1st, 1956, the writer became Junior Research
121 Fellow in the Department of Geography in the Durham Division of the University of Durham, an appointment sponsored by the Research Department of the Colonial Office. The terms of the appointment, which was to be tenable for two years, entailed research into the social factors behind the problems of rural Malta and Gozo - especially as these concern the large agricultural element in this population (Project C.D.W. (R) No. 764).

The report here submitted presents the writer's assessment of the position.

114 The sixteen months between January, 1957, and May, 1958,
[101] were spent in the Maltese Islands, the remainder of the period being spent in the Department in Durham on the analysis and preparation of material amassed in the field.

(2) ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

122 The writer wishes to record his gratitude for the help and encouragement received within both official and private circles in Malta and Gozo. During the period of work in the Islands, in 1957-58, the Maltese Government provided extensive help both to him and to a colleague, Mr. Peter K. Mitchell. This took the form of:

(a) the use of official transport for research purposes on two or three days each week throughout the period in the Islands,

(b) the provision of an interpreter for a large part of the time during which transport was also available,

(c) permission to use the facilities of certain Government Departments and other premises - on the customary Civil Service oath,

000 (d) a grant to cover certain travel expenses.

The Governor of Malta, His Excellency Sir Robert Laycock, K.C.M.G., C.B., D.S.O., and the Lieutenant-Governor, His Honour Mr. Trafford Smith, C.M.G., both showed gracious interest in the work in Malta.

General acknowledgement of other assistance given to the writer in Malta must, for reasons of space, be confined here to a few of a very long list of individuals. A very special mention must, however, be made in one case, for the writer wishes to place on record his debt to Mr. and Mrs. P.K. Mitchell for the help and friendship extended to him throughout the stay in Malta.

Profound thanks are due also to the farmers whose patience and generosity made field work among them possible and profitable. As their help and information was given in confidence individual identities have had to be obscured.

000 settlements Mgarr has only three (Appendix 4). Other characteristic features of rural Malta absent in Mgarr are the Band Club and the Football Club. The Band Club movement which spread rapidly during the second half of the nineteenth century and the early years of this became the major 'social' centre for men outside the Church itself (B/521). Similarly football has become a focus of extra-church activity in the Islands - more especially in Gozo where the Band Club has had only a limited extension outside the capital, Victoria. In the case of Mgarr one would expect the village to acquire these 'later-stage' features as it develops in size and
621 social diversity. The writer holds that at present Mgarr is essentially very close to what has been called the traditional Maltese village. Incidentally also its agricultural bias (Map 2) is less removed from the traditional than is the case in the more urban-influenced villages. It is certainly the most rural Parish of Malta and yet does seem more 'urbanate' in terms of social life than is the case over much of Gozo.

121 184 Having enumerated the essential elements of Maltese village structure as exemplified in Mgarr, a brief comparative study of other villages of the archipelago, many of which are much larger, older and more complex, is indicated. From observation two basic premises have been established:

(i) Despite the regional differentiation customarily made, rural society in the Islands has a basic homogeneity:

(ii) The modern problem of this rural society, the problem of the individual who is now socially out of sympathy with the life of the community which bred him, is common to all the rural community of the Islands.

The final question is therefore whether or not there can be a standard type of working rapprochement between the new and the old.

121 621 Two villages which may be compared with Mgarr in an effort to answer this question are Gharghur, a settlement of very old foundation, predominantly agricultural as is Mgarr and of like size, and Żurrieq, much larger, more urbanate in character, containing certain socio-functional divisions within itself, and also possessing two small satellite villages.

36 Morphologically GHARGHUR (Map 6) and Mgarr have little in common on first inspection. The latter contains many new or recent detached and semi-detached buildings within the regular street pattern previously laid down. Many of the houses are quite modern by prevailing standards and

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

PREFACE

In these pages I have endeavoured to give a short description, and, where possible, the origin of the principal Holiday Customs, Amusements *and* Sports *of the Maltese people, which I hope will prove of some interest, not only to the foreign visitors who happen to be in Malta during the time in which some of these popular customs are being observed, but also to most of the Maltese themselves, for while the observance of these customs is perhaps no where stronger than in Malta, tradition as to their origin is scanty in the extreme.*

There being in our Island, as in other countries, an array of superstitions, beliefs and practices, I have also collected in this volume, in the hope of making this work more interesting, some of the principal items of folk-lore which have been handed down to us in popular traditions, tales, rhymes, and proverbs.

V. Busuttil.

Vittoriosa,
20th June 1894.

[P.V]
[P.iV is blank]

9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1960) 1960
EZ6 Malta EZ6

CHAPTER I

Introductory

MY EIGHT CROWDED YEARS OF LIVING AND WORKING IN Malta—preceded by two brief halts as a temporary Naval Officer towards the end of the First World War—taught me a little about Maltese affairs and conditions, perhaps as much as a mere sojourner may expect to absorb in less than a decade. And the more I discovered about Malta and the Maltese, the better I grew to like both. What I then acquired, and retain, was an affection neither uncritical nor undiscriminating but based on the beginnings of understanding, I hope, of a small but complex community. I should be glad to think that something of what I have learned about and feel for those two remarkable little islands has found expression in the following pages.

This book is not a guide, it is not a handbook, it is not a history, it is not a collection of personal reminiscences, even if a personal note may be faintly audible here and there. It is above all not a commentary on Malta's politics, although I had my fill and more of these during my eight years. Twice during this period was Self-Government suspended and twice did I assume departmental charge under the Governor of the civil administration (having been concerned during Self-Government only with the Imperial side of the diarchy), a type of experience common enough among politicians returning from the wilderness to office but rare to the verge of uniqueness among Civil Servants. And there were other experiences scarcely less unusual.

Nor were Maltese politics of mere local, parish-pump range. Even in Homeric times Malta was looked upon as "the navel of the inland sea"; and the winds that blow upon it from every quarter, the cross-currents that buffet its rocky

9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1960) 1960
EZ6 Malta EZ6

121 shores, are composed of more than the physical elements of air and water. The implications and repercussions of Maltese politics when I had experience of them were unfortunately often international and sometimes politico-ecclesiastical (these can be very prickly); not infrequently they impinged upon the most fundamental constitutional principles. For the relations between Church and State have given rise to controversies that have troubled Christendom since the Dark Ages; other Maltese problems were equally deeply rooted in a long and complicated past. Their implications and repercussions bore, in fact, a striking resemblance in certain directions to those of politics in the Palestine of the Mandate, where I had previously served. Happily the Maltese scene lacked one factor—the ambiguity of the established policy—which in Palestine made an administrator's life a hell on earth; in other respects politics in Malta could be almost as corrosive, almost as pervasive. But they will not pervade this book, nor even enter it except occasionally for the sole purpose of *constatation*, that untranslatable word.

121 These, then, are the things which this book is not. I find it less easy to state what it is. I have called it an "Account and an Appreciation" because I can think of no better definition of what I have tried to do in the chapters that follow. A reviewer of one of my previous books remarked that Malta was the only part of the Mediterranean about which I had not written. At least I have now repaired that omission, if omission it may claim to have been.

114 The book was begun in Malta, continued in Barbados, [128] finished, of all places, in the Straits of Magellan, the eye-witness account of whose discovery, written by Antonio Pigafetta, a Knight of the Order of S. John, was dedicated to Philippe Villiers de L'Isle Adam, the first Grand Master of the Order to reign in Malta. I left Malta in 1938, whisked from the land-locked Mediterranean, where from choice I had served during most of my career, to the greatest of the oceans, the Pacific, at the other side of the globe. Since my